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Wednesday, November 28, 1945

Conference with the President (3:15 PM)

I presented to the President the budget of the Department of Justice with a highlight memorandum on that budget. Since there were few policy issues involved the discussion covered generally prison population, immigration and naturalization, the disposition of aliens, border patrol and the FBI. The President did not ask many questions, and he O.K.'d the budget.

Next I submitted a supplemental estimate for the Bureau of the Budget to enable us to carry out during the rest of the fiscal year our responsibilities under the recently passed Government Corporation Control Bill, which puts a big new job on the Bureau. I felt that the amount of money we were requesting for the purpose probably was not adequate and represented only a beginning until we had gained some experience. I asked the President if, when he signed the bill, he might not want to issue a statement along the general line that this legislation represented a considerable improvement in fiscal control. He said that he did consider this to be an advance of significance and that he would like very much to issue such a statement, suggesting that we prepare it for him. He approved and signed the letter covering our estimate.

I then presented our proposed Budget Bureau budget for fiscal 1947, reviewing very briefly some of our problems. I explained that while we were requesting half a million dollars more, the division heads of the Bureau had actually asked for three times that amount, but we had felt that this was as far as we should go at the present time. I told the President that I was always embarrassed when presenting my own budget even though I felt that budget directors ordinarily did not ask for sufficient funds for their own agencies. I pointed out how much we are spending for accounting and auditing in the Government and how little, relatively, we are spending for the sifting of appropriation estimates. I said that there are many fields in which we should be doing much more active work on behalf of the President; and that I feared that if the country became aware of the fact that we will have to carry a 25-billion-dollar budget as a regular thing there would be much criticism of the Bureau of the Budget because it has not dipped more carefully into some of these fields. The President then said very positively that when he was on the Hill he had felt all along that the Bureau of the Budget was inadequately financed and that we should have sufficient staff to go more deeply into many of the issues that arise. He mentioned again the Maritime Commission, and I cited a few other examples.

The President then said, "I readily approve your budget request. I doubt that it is enough. Let's take some time before too long to sit down and go over the whole situation." I said that I would welcome that opportunity. I indicated that while I had always been reluctant to take up the President's time in talking about the problems of the Budget Bureau, yet I was fully conscious of the fact that our problems are in essence really his.

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I told the President that in view of our difficulties on the Hill we might need his support very much. I said that Senator McKellar was my chief problem and that no doubt the Senator considered me one of his annoyances. I went on to say that I had not been able to make an adjustment with him; that he had taken a bad attitude toward me; and that while I was perfectly willing to bend a knee to him in the interest of the public business, no such bending of knees had produced any results. The President commented, "It sounds personal to me." I replied, "The only way I can account for it is that on several occasions the Senator wanted us to take on personnel whom we considered to be inadequate; and that another time, on the reserve in the Army, which the House Committee released, the Senator blamed me for the advance release although it came about solely by report from the Army to the House Committee." The President said, "I can tell you it is the former, and he never forgets it."

Then I gave the President a memorandum concerning the current situation on intelligence, which is getting badly messed up. I commented on the injection of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the alleged somewhat indifferent attitude of the Secretary of State. Pointing out that we had made a comprehensive study of the subject, I said that like too many other things now, it was getting royally bitched up.

I took advantage of the opportunity to say that I was rapidly developing a sense of frustration because we were not able to get things done and because I felt that the President's subordinates, not excluding the Director of the Budget, were failing him. I admitted that I was trying to find out why it is that we seem to be pushing around an increasing number of papers without being able to add up concrete accomplishments. I said that aside from our normal activities, the only thing recently about which I had any sense of satisfaction was the fact that I had been able to assign two staff members to the job of drafting for Senator Murdock all of the amendments to the Senate Reorganization Bill, and that as a result a much better bill was going to the conference committee. The President said, "You certainly did a good job on that one."

I told the President that I felt we needed somehow to get hold of the issues. Referring back to the situation with respect to intelligence, I commented that I understood it had been proposed that he have a meeting on this subject. The President said that a meeting had been suggested with Admiral Leahy; representatives of State, War and Navy; and someone else whom he had forgotten for the moment. I said that I would like to suggest - if it were not inviting myself - that I might be helpful at such a meeting. Apparently the President had not thought of this idea and he grabbed it up with a good deal of enthusiasm, it seemed to me. He said, "Of course I would like to have you sit in. I will let you know when we have any such meeting."

The President then reminded me that he had sent me a memorandum

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from Leahy on the postwar size of the Army and the Navy. He said, "I hope you will study that very carefully." I remarked, "Well, Mr. President, I hope you observed the last sentence of that memorandum. It merely adds up that the Joint Chiefs of Staff have compiled the figures and have sent you only what the Army and the Navy can agree upon. That is all we have been getting out of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for some time." He said, "That's right and that is the reason I want you to study it." I commented that the same thing applied to the intelligence problem; it gets into an interdepartmental squabble, and unless the President takes a hand it will come out as an unworkable compromise.

I presented to the President a memorandum proposing that he might like to issue a statement on the history of censorship, which would carry a foreword by Byron Price (Director of the Office of Censorship). This would give the President an opportunity to make a bow to the cooperation of the newspapers and to voluntary censorship, and to praise the rather sensitive gentlemen of the press. He responded that he would like to do that. Pointing out that timing with the Government Printing Office was important, I suggested that he turn the memorandum over to Ross (press secretary to the President).

I also presented to the President a memorandum on the administrative history of the war for which he had asked as a result of a previous discussion. The thought was that he might do a foreword and that the document might be published both by the Government and by a private publisher. I told the President that Guy Stanton Ford, historian and former president of the University of Minnesota, had read the document and had told me that he considered it very good. I explained that this was the main outside view I had received. The President was very enthusiastic about the idea and said he would be glad to prepare a foreword for the document. He indicated that he would like to see the manuscript when it is available.

Then I mentioned to the President a suggestion, which I told him a newspaperman had made, that the President invite 100 Russian newspapermen to this country. I explained that I was reluctant to make the suggestion in a memorandum since the Secretary of State might think it was none of my business, but that I thought the idea had some possibilities. The President responded very favorably. He said he thought it was a smart idea and he seemed to indicate that it had come to him from some other source. I said that if he were to advance the idea I hoped that the State Department would not insist on our having the same number of newspapermen in Russia. The President seemed to have plans for taking up the subject with the Secretary of State.

The President then referred to a newspaper which contained the headlines about the Hurley resignation (Patrick J. Hurley, Ambassador to China). He indicated that he was happy to get Marshall (General George C. Marshall, just retired as Chief of Staff of the Army) to

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serve and that he was pretty unhappy about the State Department.

This led me to say, "Mr. President, you have been undercutting me on personnel today." He asked, "How's that?" I referred to his conference with Wilson Wyatt (recently Mayor of Louisville, Kentucky) and told him that I had been trying to get Wyatt to go to China (in charge of the Budget mission). The President said, "I certainly did not mean to undercut you. You know I am trying to find someone to head the Civil Aeronautics Board. Welch Pogue wants to leave as soon as possible. Maybe Wyatt could do the China job if it did not take too long." I backed down on this and said that I thought Wyatt ought to make up his mind which position he should take. We talked briefly about the importance of the Budget mission to China.

I brought to the attention of the President the current propaganda of the scientists against his position in favor of a single administrator for the research foundation, and I inquired as to whether he had altered his views in anyway. The President replied in most positive language that he had not and that he did not propose to do so.

Having spent 35 or 40 minutes with the President, I thanked him for permitting me to have this much time, and the conference was ended.

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